

Message Text

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51

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 OMB-01 INT-05 DODE-00 PA-02 USIA-15

PRS-01 SP-02 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 /064 W

----- 112924

R 130441Z MAY 75

FM AMCONSUL PORT MORESBY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 513

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

UNCLAS PORT MORESBY 0440

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ELAB, EMIN, PP

SUBJ: LABOR RIOT AT BOUGAINVILLE COPPER MINE

1. LOCAL PRESS REPORTS THAT 1000 MINERS, NEARLY HALF OF MINE WORKFORCE WENT ON RAMPAGE MAY 12. SKETCHY OUTLINE OF EVENTS AS REPORTED FOLLOWS:

2. CANTEEN FIGHT INVOLVING HIGH UNION OFFICIAL SAID TO HAVE INITIATED MARCH ON PAY OFFICE TO DEMAND RAISE WHICH WORKERS CLAIMED HAD BEEN AGREED UPON LAST YEAR. ARBITRATION MEETING BETWEEN THE COMPANY AND LABOR DEPARTMENT WAS IN PROGRESS AT TIME, AND UNION OFFICER CLAIMS MINERS WENT TO OFFICE TO PRESENT CASE. AS WORKERS MARCHED ON OFFICE, COMPANY SECURITY OFFICIALS BEGAN EVACUATION OF STAFF. SOME SENIOR STAFF WERE BESIEGED BUT LATER ESCAPED. AS MINERS CONTINUED ACTIVITIES COMPANY CLOSED THE MINE AND DEMOBILIZED HEAVY EQUIPMENT.

3. MOBILE POLICE SQUADS WERE SENT FROM ARAWA TO MINE SITE AND WERE FORCED TO USE TEAR GAS TO DISPERSE MOB WHICH HAD BLOCKED EVACUATION OF EXPATRIATE AND PNG STAFF. ACCORDING TO PRESS VEHICLE ATTEMPTING BREAK THROUGH MOB WAS BLOCKED AND POLICE STONED BY WORKERS WHEN THEY ATTEMPTED RESCUE IT.

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ALL AVAILABLE VEHICLES WERE RUSHED TO MINE FOR EVACUATION

BUT RIOTERS BLOCKED ROAD WITH TWO BULLDOZERS AND THEN PROCEEDED TO TEAR UP ROADBED. FAMILIES REMAINING AT SITE ARE STILL POSITIONED FOR EVACUATION.

4. DURING DAY WORKERS SMASHED PANGUNA POLICE STATION, GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES AND SOME COMPANY OFFICES. ONE COMPANY EXECUTIVE, BRIAN COLE, ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL DUE INJURIES, ACCORDING TO PRESS. NO OTHER INJURIES REPORTED AS YET.

5. BY LATE EVENING MAY 12 ORDER WAS RESTORED AND POLICE AND BOUGAINVILLE COPPER SECURITY MEN ARE ON PATROL.

6. PRIOR CURRENT DISTURBANCES, ONLY STRIKE AT MINE SINCE OPERATIONS COMMENCED WAS DURING DECEMBER 1974. CLOSURE OF MINE REPORTEDLY COSTS BC ADOLS 500,000 PER DAY.
COMMENT: ISSUE WAS EVIDENTLY THE BELIEF ON PART OF MINERS THAT COMPANY HAS NOT HONORED INDUSTRIAL AGREEMENT. MINERS THREATEN STRIKE OF MONTH DURATION IF NECESSARY TO GET HEARING.
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Message Attributes

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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